

History of the Horse Protection Act

Introduction to the Horse Protection Act

- The Horse Protection Act was first passed by Congress in 1970
- The purpose of the law is to end the cruel and inhumane practice of soring horses
- This practice involves injuring the legs and feet of horses, particularly Tennessee Walking Horses and racking horses, to alter their natural gait in order to gain an unfair competitive advantage in horse shows and exhibitions
- The USDA is responsible for administering the Horse Protection Act



Origins and the Rise of Soring Practices

- The practice of soring became prevalent in the 1950s and 1960s
- Newspapers and magazines published articles sounding the alarm that trainers were using heavy chains and shoes and caustic chemicals to force an exaggerated gait
- These practices allow trainers to handle more horses in their stables and make horses ready for showing more quickly than they could accomplish with careful and patient training
- Widespread public concern regarding soring led to the passage of the Horse Protection Act



Strengthening the Law – 1976 Amendments



- Because of enforcement challenges, Congress amended the Horse Protection Act in 1976
- Along with other changes, the 1976 Amendments placed greater responsibility for excluding sore horses on the management of horse shows, exhibitions, sales, and auctions
- The Act gives management a choice:
  - Hire qualified individuals to inspect horses and enjoy limited liability for violations, or
  - Choose not to hire someone and accept full responsibility for any sore horses that compete in their event

Horse Protection – A Shared Responsibility

Although USDA is the Federal agency that administers the HPA, everyone has a role in ending the cruel and inhumane practice of soring:

- **Trainers** must stop soring horses
- **Owners and exhibitors** must not allow trainers to sore their horses so they can gain an unfair advantage in competition
- **Management** must prevent all sore horses from participating in their event
- **Individuals hired by management to conduct inspections** must perform careful and thorough inspections to identify sore horses and other violations




If you have questions, please visit our website at:
www. aphis.usda.gov/hpa